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Atari Online News, Etc.
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~ Netscape Beta Released ~ People Are Talking! ~ Enhanced StarOffice

~ New HypView Released! ~ MS Free Anti-Spyware! ~ College Web Auction
~ Tracking Students Out! ~ XBox Power Cord Recall ~ New IE This Summer!
~ Yahoo’s Small Victory ~ New Matrix Is Coming! ~ New MyDoom Surfaces

-* Atari Yesteryear - WAACE ’90 *-
-* Ultimate Encryption Method Cracked! *-
-* Uncle Sam Gets "D-Plus" In Cyber Security! *-

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->From the Editor’s Keyboard "Saying it like it is!"
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It’s been another one of those "weeks that was". I don’t know about you, but I’m ready for the good times to roll! Things have to improve eventually. This past week started last weekend when I got a call from one of my old college buddies. One of our close friends had passed away earlier in the day. Good ol’ "L’il Buddy" - one of the nicest guys that you’d ever meet. We met 35 years ago in a small college dorm in Boston’s Back Bay. We had a lot of adventures back in those days. I remember his wedding, the birth of his first kid, and numerous reunions over the years. Although we weren’t in active contact over the years, we talked on occasion and reminisced about the good ole days a lot. At least I still have the memories.

Speaking of memory lane, I finally have our first installment of some great memories of our Atari past. The first AtariFest that I ever attended was a WAACE show - the first one at the Reston Sheraton. What a weekend! So, I did some searching, especially through some of Michael Burkley’s Suzy B’s CD archives, and found some early reports that first appeared in Z*Net. Later in this issue, I’ve compiled those reports and brought them back. Reading those report of the show brought back a lot of terrific memories of that show. In the next few weeks, we’ll have some more tidbits from the past. It’s great to reminisce!

Until next time...

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HypView 0.35.1 Released

Gerhard Stoll has announced:

Version 0.35.1 of the ST-Guide clone HypView has been released.

Latest changes:
- Save up to 10 favorite files using marker
- Support for Pure C Help protocol / AC_HELP message
- CTRL+SHIFT+V displays clipboard in a new window

- Bug fixed: loading of skins should work again
- Global window-cycling is configurable
- File errors are displayed in an alert box

http://www.xn--donz-epa.ch/atari/software/hypview.php

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->A-ONE User Group Notes! - Meetings, Shows, and Info!
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Tales of Yesteryear!

/// 1990 WAACE ATARIFEST REPORTS

I want to begin by saying that the WAACE show was one of the best Atari Shows I have attended. And I have been involved in or attended a lot of them. One of the things I enjoy most about Atari shows is you can get a first look at many new products. This show had them in abundance.

Joppa Computer Products introduced "JuST the FAX!". This is a hardware/ software product that allows you to send FAX messages using 4800 baud, Group 3 FAX transmission. It also doubles as an excellent 2400 baud modem that will work with any communication program, such as FLASH. The software will allow you to convert IMG, Degas, and ASCII files into a FAX file for transmission. There are printer drivers to allow you to convert Pagestream and Calamus files to FAX, allowing you to produce your page and then FAX it to someone. The price for all of this is $169 suggest retail. It was sold at the show for $139. I did a few quick tests, and sent out a couple Pagestream pages to the FAX machine at work and it really works nice! There will be some upcoming upgrades that will allow both sending and receiving FAX messages at 9600 baud, and adds additional features to the modem. For more info contact Joppa at (301)679-4102.

Alpha Systems, had two new products. JamMaster is a powerful software program digital sampling synthesizer program loaded with features. It requires a cartridge based sound digitizer for output, such as Digisound Professional, and a MIDI compatible keyboard. You create your own sounds and assign them to your keyboard. You can have up to 32 different sounds and any number of octaves. Instead of using musical sounds, try some digitized voices or sound effects. It’s great! Also introduced was an inexpensive clock card called Watchcart. This is a simple, bare bones cartridge that is just what I was looking for. I’m not sure what the retail price was (it wasn’t in their flyer) but the show price was $12.

HiSoft was showing their line of products, including lattice C Version 5, and the new HARLEKIN program. Harlekin is a bunch of useful utilities rolled into one neat package. Just to name a few, there is a word processor, scrapbook, disk editor, terminal program, calendar,

ascii table, RAMdisk, printer spooler...and on and on. It does require at least 1Mb of memory however. Hisoft is a British company, but I believe Michtron is a distributor of this product. (Sorry, I was reading my notes about this on the plane trip back, and it was too late to ask).

In the Gadgets by Small booth...well what can I say. All sorts of new toys over there! Spectre GCR was running on a TT. The 68030 was installed and strutting it's stuff. It was running next to a second ST running the same bouncing ball demo, at TWICE the speed! The 68030 upgrade is quite large, and will probably be offered as a Mega upgrade only, unless Dave can figure out a way to shrink it down. The Telsa coil was a real grin. Can't wait for that to go into mass production.

Sliccware introduced their new product SLICCTOP. WOW! This desktop replacement features multi-tasking, code swapping, process queuing, unlimited windows, data sharing, code sharing, dynamic memory, and too much other stuff to mention! Watch for a review of this product in the near future.

ICD introduced their new product, AdSpeed. This is an 68000 accelerator for all models of Atari ST's from the 520 through the STE. Using a multilayer, surface mount design, the chip is the side of the 68000 chip and will be no problem to install. Just unsolder the old chip, install a socket and install the AdSpeed. I ordered one at the show and will have more information once I can get it installed and play with it. The flyer gives the following features: No mouse, I/O or blitter conflicts, no jumper wires, software selectable true 68000 8 MHz mode for 100% compatibility (switches speeds on the fly without rebooting the computer), 32 kilobytes of high speed static RAM for 16k of data/ instruction cache and 16k of cache tag memory, full read and write-through caching for maximum speed, and supports 16 MHZ high speed ROM access.

Genie had a few surprises of their own. This month, Genie began their new price cutting rates. To help the user even more, they are introducing Aladdin. This is a terminal program written by Tim Purves of Michtron. You now have full featured program that lets you automate your online time by automatically capturing messages and download descriptions. You can then read and reply to messages while off line, and select files to download. The program will then automatically send your messages, and download the files. Full use of the GEM interface makes this program a must have for all Genie users. Best of all, it's FREE. It should be available for downloading sometime this week.

Add to all of these new products a number of upgrades for many other products, and this was a very enjoyable show. The exhibition rooms featuring a number of topics were great also! I don't know how they lucked out and found a hotel that could fit in so many of these "classrooms" but I sure hope they can secure it for future WAACE shows.

But you didn't think I'd leave without complaining about something, did you? Will someone please explain the Dulles Toll road to me? You can travel from Dulles airport directly to Washington DC for free, but get off in the middle and you pay a toll? I smell a loophole in all of this!

I'll start this article out with a one-word first impression of the show: WOW. Having been to the last two or three WAACE AtariFests held at Fairfax High School, the professional look of this one at the Sheraton Reston really impressed me. I think it's the kind of image Atari needs to make a comeback in the U.S. I spoke to some of the organizers as I was getting ready to leave at about 3:30 P.M. and was told their best guess on attendance for the day was 1500. Yes, that's one thousand, five hundred! Not bad. The official total was to be announced at the 8:00 P.M. banquet. I don't know how accurate the number is, but it certainly was crowded the six hours I was there. Let's hope tomorrow is as busy.

Now on to the show. There was one very large room that held most of the vendors and eight smaller rooms for specialized topics such as education, Mac and IBM emulation, midi, games, DTP & productivity, a swap meet, users groups and the seminars. Very nice layout. Especially with the large turnout. I didn't get to talk to every vendor today, but those I missed I'll try to talk to for tomorrow's report.

I'll start with what I thought was the most impressive booth: Gadgets by Small. Now I don't even own a Mac emulator (and I don't work for Dave Small), but he sure had the STuff to look at!! Would you believe a MegaST 4 with 12 megabytes of RAM and running at 18 megahertz!?! I actually played with it, too! Boy did that thing fly! And Dave said he hasn't even "tweaked" it yet and should be able to get it faster! It was equipped with Dave's new 68030 board with 8MB of RAM installed. That, along with the 4 megs of the Mega, made up the 12. This may be the way to go if you just want blind speed and don't need the extras the TT has. No, it's not available yet (nor is the price), but Dave says he will be marketing it in the future. He also had Spectre GCR running on a TT and a Telsa coil demo at his booth. If you're going to be at the show tomorrow, and missed the Gadgets booth today, make sure you take the time to check it out.

D.A. Brumleve was there with the latest versions of all her great KID programs: KIDPublisher Pro 6.2, KIDGrid 1.6, KIDPainter 2.3a and a new one (to the public) called Telgram (already at version 2.5) that allows kids to send each other "telegrams", complete with music.

Debonair Software was represented by J. Andrzej Wrotniak and was showing a new version (1.3) of ElCal, the math machine. Star Base v1.02, a complex astronomy program, was also on display. Mr. Wrotniak informed me that the public domain versions of these two programs (SubCal and Star 2000) would be uploaded to CompuServe sometime this weekend, so look for them.

Goldleaf Publishing, Inc. had version 1.1 of Wordflair for sale at their booth, although you couldn't upgrade version 1.0 at the show even if you had brought along your original disk. The upgrade is only available by mail. I was told Wordflair 2 would be available right after Comdex with LOTS of new features.

HiSoft was there showing Lattice C version 5 (not related to version 3) and a new version of their Devpac ST assembler. They wanted everyone to know that they were still supporting the ST, even though Michtron, who was distributing their products, has decided not to continue to carry them anymore. They will also be supporting the TT.

NeoDesk 3 was available at the Gribnif Software booth to both new and

old users. Upgrading was available to registered user "while-u-wait". They seemed to be pretty busy every time I passed by.

Joe Waters of Current Notes was there selling his magazine and wanted everyone to know that his entire public domain or Spectre software libraries are now available on 44 meg cartridges.

Branch Always Software was upgrading Quick ST II to version 2.2 and mentioned that Quick ST III was still in the works. For those of you that didn't get a manual with Quick Tools, it was available at the show. I got mine and it looks like it will really help me to use all the great programs in this package.

A newcomer, Frontier Software, was attending their first U.S. show today. They were selling a cartridge-type clock called "Forget-Me-Clock II" which allows other cartridges to be plugged into it so the cartridge slot isn't lost when using the clock. They also had a product called the "Xtra-RAM STe Solder-Free RAM Upgrade" that looked good. For you entrepreneurs out there, they mentioned that they are looking for dealers and/or distributors in the U.S. for their products. Go for it.

Double Click Software had new version of both DC Desktop and DC Utilities and were upgrading at the show. The new versions are 1.2a for Desktop and 2.0 for Utilities. If you have older versions of these programs, upgrade them. They have been extensively improved.

Talon Technologies had LOTS of SuperChargers for sale. And at a reduced price for the show. They included the new version 1.4 of the software too, which they were also upgrading for anyone that had earlier versions. TC Power was being shown which allows you to use your Atari's RAM as expanded memory and 64K of extended memory. A software upgrade to OmniSwitch was also available for a reasonable price.

Of course Codehead Software was there with lots of STuff. All the latest versions of their software was available to be sold or upgraded. Two new programs were being shown too: CodeKeys! (customized mouse and keyboard macros for any program) and LookIt! & PopIt! (a file viewer/ binary editor & desk accessory that lets you assign "hot keys" to your DA's). If you need to know if you have the latest version of any Codehead program, they are: CodeKeys!-1.1, LookIt! & PopIt!-1.0, G+Plus -1.3, MultiDesk-2.1, HotWire-2.3, MaxiFile-2.0, CodeHead Utilities-Rel. 3 and MIDIMAX-1.3.

Data Innovations was showing version 2.11 of their excellent hard drive backup program Diamond Back II. They were upgrading at the show also. 3 in 1 College & Pro Football and Basketball, the Pro Game was selling too.

The Atari Corp. booth was pretty busy. It had STE's on display running demo's to show off the colors and sound. Quite impressive. One area was reserved for the Portfolio and was displaying two new products: the Portfolio PC Card Drive (HPC301) which lets your desktop PC read and write to Atari Portfolio Memory Cards, with data exchange happening in an instant; and a Finance Card, which turns your Portfolio into a financial genius with amortization schedules, break-even analyses, compound investments and depreciation alternatives.

There were lots of other vendors and I hope to talk to them all tomorrow. Look here for another report. But before I finish, I did attend one seminar which I'd like to report on today. The Bob Brodie

and "Atari Corporation: Live!" seminar. This was kind of a special day for Bob as it was his 1 year anniversary with Atari. Also, the WAACE AtariFest 1989 was the first show he attended in his current job. He spoke about his first Atari system (a 400) and his current one (Mega ST 4). About how he first discovered "users groups". He got quite a response when he told one particular story of his early days as Users Group Coordinator. Seems he told his bosses that his policy was to always tell the public the "truth" and nothing but the "truth". When questioned by his superiors why he thought this policy would work, Bob replied, "Because you never tried it before." Let's hope Bob stays around for a long time!

WAACE ATARIFEST 1990 - DAY 2 by Scott Lapham

First off, I'd like to apologize to all of the people that I didn't write about in yesterday's article who were at the show and showing/ selling a product. I tried to get to everyone but was not successful. I'm kind of new at this and hope I'll do better (if asked) in the future. It was hard trying to concentrate on writing the article and seeing all the things that were there to see.

The second day of Atarifest 1990 was much less crowded than the first day, but I didn't hear too many people complaining. Overall, the vendors were very pleased with the show and from more than one perspective. They liked selling all the products (of course), but a lot of them also mentioned how nice the people were. Words like "pleasant" and "enthusiastic" were often used. One vendor said it was nice to be at a show without "Atari-bashers" everywhere. I'll second that motion.

Here are some quotes from day 2 on sales: "We did about the same as last year", L&Y Electronics; "We sold out of all the SuperChargers we brought. On a scale of one to ten, I'd give the show an 8", Talon Technologies; "This was the second best show I've ever been to (behind Toronto)", Branch Always Software; "Our first day here was better than all of last year", ISD Marketing; "Much better than last year...close to best show ever", CodeHead Software; "First day was 50 percent better than last year", Debonair Software; "Best show this year...better than last year", D.A. Brumleve; "Excellent, although it helps to debut a new product", WizWorks; "About the same as last year", Current Notes; "Very good...about the same as Glendale, which was the second best show this year (behind WOA)", Zubair Interfaces, Inc; "Very good...as good as Glendale, which was best ever", Gribnif Software; "Great...better than last year", Joppa Computers; "Not quite as good as last year", Best Electronics; "Good...made more contacts than expected and almost sold out of product", Frontier Software (their first U.S. show); "Great...did lots of updates", Data Innovations; "I wasn't selling but all my fliers about the 68030 board are gone...lots of interest shown", Gadgets by Small; "Good show...best this year", Double Click Software.

The above said, it wasn't ALL positive. There were a few complaints about the lack of chairs for the people working the booths. Made for a long day. And bigger booths were mentioned too. On the flip side of that, Darek of BRA said WAACE did "an incredible job". He said they sent "lots" of updates to vendors to keep them on top of what was going on before the show. He rates it best in organization and advertising this year and thinks WAACE deserves applause.

Before I go, I'd like to mention a few things from the "Atari

Corporation: Technically Speaking" seminar. Ken Badertscher (the "TOS god" according to Bob Brodie) felt the day was right for some "true confessions". He said the resolution bug in STE TOS (1.6) "may" have been caused by some people working long and hard one weekend to get 1.6 out the door and "maybe" some of TOS 1.4 code got mixed up with it when being put together. He said TOS 1.62 fixes this but doesn't know if 1.62 will be available to the public soon or ever. Also, he said the DMA problem with the STE "may" have been caused by someone putting in the wrong chip at the factory. Even if true, it's not happening anymore. Enough of "true confessions". He also said that a new GDOS (which supports scaleable outline fonts) was for real. Sounds like good news to me. When asked if UIS-III, QuickST, etc. would ever be included in a version of TOS, the answer was N-O. Too expensive. Oh, well.

I'll end on a note you "insiders" may enjoy; How much memory does it take to open a VDI workstation? Answer: 3K. (hmmmm...it got lots of laughs at the show?!) Cheers.

WAACE ATARIFEST 1990

Category 11, Topic 6 Message 121 Sat Oct 06, 1990
DARLAH [RT~SYSOP] at 18:03 EDT

The show has been really busy. I am not sure of the numbers. The door people say there has been about 1200 to 1500 registered but I thought it felt like a whole lot more. I know the developers that I talked to were all very happy. The booths packed where developers had a hard time getting back into their own booths. I am impressed with the quality of the show and am glad that they held it in this sort of environment.

Dave Small really did show his Tesla coil. I even helped in holding the various light bulbs. I couldn't believe that he brought it. The guy is a kick and proved to be a highlight of the show.

GEnie was showing Aladdin for the ST. The general public should see this one VERY soon. It will not only automate your time but save you the much needed $$ that we all need to do with the holidays coming up.

Numerous developers were available at the show. I think everyone that is on the list J.D.BARNES uploaded earlier in this thread showed. Not one commented negatively.

Category 11, Topic 6 Message 133 Mon Oct 08, 1990
J.MEEHAN3 [Joe] at 07:50 EDT

Just Back from WAACE (an 8 hour drive with no sleep)

Some quick notes,

Two 030 boards at the show, working! Estimated delivery late 1990?
Two TTs seen working!
A Hyper Card sort of program for the ST.
Aladdin Working - I had a chance to play with it a little and it looks great. Thanks GEnie and Tom Purves (sorry Tom about the spelling)
Aladdin, a special program to do all you want to do on GEnie easier and quicker (save$) should be available later this week for download. Only charge will be for download. Watch for an announcement in the ST RT

banner.

Many thanks to all the hard working WAACE people and all those who put this very professional and fun show together. Thanks for the tickets Russ.

Charles Johnson gave a great speech at the dinner Sat night. How about posting the text in the library? I have my copy but I am sure that others would be interested.

Category 11, Topic 6 Message 134 Mon Oct 08, 1990
NEVIN-S at 09:30 EDT

The WAACE show was GREAT. It was my first show displaying Tracker/ST and as a vendor I was very happy. I met a bunch of my registered users, and had a lot of success selling both to the general public and to the stores that had booths at the show. I think all of the other vendors were very happy as well.

Since I was at the Step Ahead Software booth all day I didn't really have a chance to see much else. Gadgets and Jim Allen each had their own separate 68030 boards (at different booths). They both seemed nice. CodeHead was doing blockbuster business and there were always a bunch of people at the Gribnif booth. Joppa introduced a Fax system for the ST. Mr. HyperLink came down from Canada to introduce his product (but I did not see his speech). Nathan was at the Toad Computer booth showing folks the entire Calamus line. The happiest area of the show seemed to be the Dorothy Brumleve table next to the WizWorks/Dr. Bob table. There were always a few young folks using KidPublisher Pro and smiling, and people lined up to use MugShot and check out Image Cat. Lots of folks got videotaped (including me) for a Mug Shot compilation disk. That 2 table area was definitely hopping.

Charles speech was very good and it has already been uploaded as part of ST Report.

Neil Harris was at the show and he looked great. I think working at GEnie (not working for Atari??!!) agrees with him.

Darlah looked more beautiful than ever and was showing Aladdin with help from Jeff Williams and author Tim Purves. Dan McNamee had SoftSource running on a Moniterm.

I did not have a chance to go to any of the seminars. But the show was definitely a success. The hotel was nice, the exhibition space was good, the crowds were good, people were in a good mood and no shots were fired. <grin>

Category 11, Topic 6 Message 135 Mon Oct 08, 1990
ISD [Nathan] at 15:45 EDT

It was a great show. The organization by WAACE was excellent and let me add my congratulations to their chairman, Russ Brown for the superb job. All the Developers enjoyed themselves without exception. We all met lots of our customers and there was an excellent turnout overall. The response to Aladdin was great. I might also add that at one point Eric Rosenquist of Steno/Stalker fame manned one of the GEnie stations showing off his product as well. Eric came down from Ottawa, more than

a few hour drive. :-) Bob Brodie talked to a packed house. The room held 216 seats. Every seat was taken and then so were all the walls. :-) Can he pack them in. :-) Let me also thank all those of you that attended the Calamus seminar that I put on. It wasn't quite as packed as Bob's as there were maybe a few dozen empty seats, :-) but there were more than enough to make for an interesting discussion. Thank you to all that attended. The banquet was packed. Not an empty seat in the place and Charles' speech was highly entertaining. One excerpt comes to mind, something about picturing Jim Allen as the white rabbit in Alice in Wonderland. Those that have met the diminutive Jim, imagine him in a bunny suit if you will. :-) I'm sure that many other posts will appear in the next few days so I will leave it to those more erudite than I to fill you in. Great show Russ, thanks!!

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PEOPLE ARE TALKING
compiled by Joe Mirando
joe@atarinews.org

[Editor's note: Due to Joe being under the weather this week, PAT will not appear. Stay tuned nest week.]

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->In This Week's Gaming Section - Xbox Power Cord Recall!
"""""""""""""""""""""""""""""""" Atari To Release New Matrix!

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->A-ONE's Game Console Industry News - The Latest Gaming News!
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Atari to Release New 'Matrix' Game This Holiday

Video game publisher Atari Inc. will return to the universe of "The Matrix" with a new game that lets players assume the role of actor Keanu Reeves' lead character Neo, the company said on Monday.

"The Matrix: Path of Neo" will be out this holiday season for the PC and

leading game consoles, Atari said.

The Wachowski brothers, who wrote and directed the "Matrix" trilogy of films and directed the 2003 video game "Enter the Matrix," will write and direct for the new game as well.

"Enter the Matrix," released in May 2003, was heavily criticized in the gaming press amid accusations of serious bugs in the game. It became a smash hit nonetheless and has sold 6 million units worldwide.

The likenesses of the key characters from the films will appear in the game, as will footage from the movies.

Last week Atari said it would substantially overhaul its operations, closing two studios and committing to spending more time and money on games to improve their development.

Microsoft to Recall Xbox Cords Due to Electrical Issue

Microsoft Corp., the world’s largest software maker, said on Thursday it will recall 14.1 million power cords for its Xbox video game console after a defect gave some users minor singe burns and scorched carpets.

Robbie Bach, chief Xbox officer for Microsoft, told Reuters the recall covered all Xboxes made for continental Europe before Jan. 13, 2004, and units made for the rest of the world before Oct. 23, 2003.

Consoles built after those dates were designed in such a way that the failures no longer occurred, Bach said.

"It ends up being a combination of both things in the box and circumstances," he said. "It did take us quite a bit of time to understand that there was a challenge."

The company declined to say who manufactured the defective units but said it was accepting responsibility for the problem. Microsoft also declined to comment on what the replacement program would cost the company, other than characterizing it as a "significant investment."

The recall represents a significant portion of the worldwide Xbox installed base of more than 20 million. Microsoft debuted the Xbox in November 2001 in the United States and subsequently rolled it out worldwide.

Based on reports to its customer service unit and warranty repair data, Bach said Microsoft had observed a failure rate of about 1 in 10,000 units.

In seven of those units, users reported suffering minor burns akin to briefly touching a hot iron. In 23 cases, users reported minor smoke damage or burns to a carpet or entertainment center.

Affected customers can request a new power cord free of charge via the Web site, Xbox.com (http://www.xbox.com), or by calling toll-free numbers in their respective countries.

Microsoft said customers would get replacement cords within 2-4 weeks from the time of order, and in the interim it advised users to turn off their Xboxes when not in use.

In March 2002, Japanese retailers temporarily stopped selling the console just weeks after its launch there because some machines were scratching discs. The company made an unconditional offer to replace hardware and any damaged software.

Bach said some consoles on retail shelves in Japan and Korea were also affected by the electrical problem and Microsoft was working with retailers there to replace the cords in those units.

Microsoft is widely expected to release a successor to the Xbox this year. Rival and industry leader Sony Corp. is expected to launch the third version of its popular PlayStation console next year.

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A-ONE's Headline News
The Latest in Computer Technology News
Compiled by: Dana P. Jacobson

Uncle Sam Gets 'D-Plus' on Cyber-Security

The Department of Homeland Security led a list of seven agencies that received flunking grades for their cyber-security efforts in 2004, with the federal government at large earning an overall grade of "D-plus" from a key congressional oversight committee.

For the fifth straight year, at least half of all federal agencies received a grade of "D" or worse on the House Government Reform Committee's annual cyber-security report card. Agencies that received failing marks include the departments of Agriculture, Commerce, Energy, Health and Human Services, Housing and Urban Development, and Veterans Affairs. A grade of "D" was awarded to the departments of Defense and Treasury, as well as the National Aeronautics and Space Administration and the Small Business Administration.

The congressional panel based the grades on internal agency assessments and information that agencies are required to submit annually to the White House Office of Management and Budget. Grades depended on how well agencies met the requirements set out in the Federal Information Security Management Act (FISMA). The law requires agencies to meet a wide variety of computer security standards, ranging from operational details - such as ensuring proper password management by workers and restricting employee access to sensitive networks and documents - to creating procedures for reporting security problems.

This year's overall grade of "D-plus" was up slightly from last year's "D" and the "F" grade Uncle Sam earned on the report card in 2002.

Committee Chairman Tom Davis (R-Va.) said he was encouraged by the fact that 10 agencies improved their scores over 2003, increasing the overall governmentwide grade by 2.5 points this year. But he chided agencies for not moving fast enough.

"I hope it won’t take some kind of major cyber-attack to wake everybody up," Davis said.

Eight agencies earned lower grades for 2004. The departments of Commerce and Veterans Affairs saw their marks drop from a "C" two years ago to an "F" in 2004.

One explanation for the lower grades, according to Dennis Heretick, the chief information security officer for the Justice Department, is that agencies were required to meet new standards last year that were not evaluated in past report cards, such as determining how frequently agencies applied software patches to fix known computer security flaws.

Several agencies made significant gains in 2004. The Department of Justice (news - web sites), for example, increased its score from an "F" in 2003 to a "B-minus" last year. The U.S. Agency for International Development earned an "A-plus" - up from a "C-minus" in 2003 - though the agency was among three this year that failed to submit its internal assessment for an independent evaluation.

The Department of Transportation elevated its grade from a "D-plus" in 2003 to an "A-minus" last year, an increase that department chief information officer Dan Matthews attributed to high-level attention to computer security issues.

"One should never underestimate the power of [DOT Secretary Norman Mineta] telling the staff that he wants to make this happen," Matthews said. "I don’t think there are a lot of agencies that do have the CIO talking to the secretary on a near daily basis."

Fifteen federal information security officers said establishing enforceable internal computer security policies was the key driver in improving their agencies’ cyber-security grades, according to a phone survey conducted by Telos Corp., a government technology contractor. Thirty out of 117 federal chief information security officers were contacted for the survey, results of which were released today in conjunction with the cyber-security report cards.

Some computer security experts expressed concern that the annual report cards amount to little more than a bureaucratic exercise. For years, lawmakers in Congress have warned federal agency leaders that they would slash funding for technology projects that fail to meet basic computer security requirements. But despite such threats, agency funding has remained unaffected by high or low grades on the computer security report cards, according federal security officers contacted for the Telos survey.

"If there are no incentives for agencies to comply with FISMA requirements, what is the point?", said Richard P. Tracy, chief security officer for Telos.

Amit Yoran, a former high-ranking cyber-security official in the Bush administration, said the report cards sometimes don’t completely measure all the steps agencies have taken to improve security.

"This is more an audit of agency paperwork than it is jacking into the networks and looking at the systems and actual performance of an agency’s security technologies," Yoran said. "That said, it is clear that the government is not at a level it needs to be in protecting its own systems."

Rep. Davis said cutting technology budgets for agencies that fail to improve their cyber-security grade could prove counterproductive. But he said he plans to examine ways to amend the current law so that agencies that show marked improvements are rewarded for their progress.

"We'd like to make sure FISMA doesn't become a paperwork exercise where agencies comply with the letter of the law but not the spirit of it," he said.

Another Form of Encryption Goes Down for the Count

News that a nine-year-old encryption method - one that underlies the protection of virtually all secure online communications - appears to have been cracked by a team of three Chinese researchers has spurred encryption experts around the world to issue a call to action.

The standard, known as SHA-1, "is used in pretty much every cryptographic protocol out there," says encryption expert Bruce Schneier. "[SHA-1 is] used in SSH, in SSL, in S/MIME, in PGP. It's used in IPSec. VPNs use it. Everybody uses it."

The scope of the problem is enormous. Virtually all application and server software that incorporates SHA-1 into its functions - including Web browsers, e-mail clients, instant messaging programs, secure shell clients, and file- and disk-encryption software - will need to be replaced or upgraded.

"We all sort of knew this could happen, but we didn't expect it this bad, this soon," says Schneier, who also blogs about security topics.

"This is a critical break in SHA that is just at the edge of feasibility," Schneier says. But even though SHA-1 has been broken by academics, that doesn't mean the government or criminals will be able to spy on your encrypted communications immediately.

For regular computer users, the breaking of SHA-1 has no sudden repercussions. Secure online communications have not been thrown wide open. A tougher standard that hasn't been broken, called SHA-256, already exists. Encryption experts are urging software companies to integrate SHA-256 into applications that currently use SHA-1.

Coincidentally, the news about SHA-1 has come out during one of the largest conferences about computer security and encryption, the annual RSA Data Security Conference, which runs through Friday in San Francisco.

"We've all been discussing what we're going to do for some time," says Jon D. Callas, chief technology officer for PGP, a company that makes encryption products for individual and business computer users, as well as high-end mail encryption gateways for enterprises. "The next release of PGP will incorporate SHA-256 into the software," Callas says. "PGP 9 will likely go into beta in a few weeks."

"At PGP, we've been working on this for a long time, but we're a little quicker about this kind of stuff than most people," Callas adds.

"This is not a 'Run for the exits, the place is on fire' kind of situation," Callas says. "It's 'The fire alarm is on, this is not a drill,

please move to the exits.’"

Schneier posted a brief item about SHA-1 on his blog Tuesday, crediting three Shandong University researchers - Xiaoyun Wang, Yiqun Lisa Yin, and Hongbo Yu - with the achievement.

"They are respected cryptographers, their work is phenomenally good. This is not a fly-by-night group, and there’s no reason not to believe this [is real]," he says.

He describes SHA-1, invented by the National Security Agency in 1995, as "the most common cryptographic primitive" on the Internet. (Cryptographic primitive is an academic term describing a mathematical formula that cryptographers can use to scramble and unscramble codes.)

In the arcane language of encryption, SHA-1 is known as a one-way hash function. Cryptographers use these tools to calculate a hash value for a secret message. Hash values help guarantee that a secret message has not been tampered with in transit, and they can’t be used by spies to reconstruct the message.

"We know less about hashing than anything else in crypto - and we thought we knew more," Callas says. "It will probably take us another two to five years until we really understand hashing algorithms, and in the meantime there will be more dramatic things that will happen."

Breaking encryption takes immense amounts of computing power. The researchers who cracked SHA-1 didn’t have banks of supercomputers at their disposal, so instead they used a distributed computing program - Callas describes it as "basically something like SETI@Home" - to harness the idle computing power of thousands of PCs around the world to complete the task.

"The best attack anyone has ever done [on current encryption] was the distributed attack on MD5-RC64, which took 300,000 computers - and it took them five years," Callas says. "[Breaking SHA-1] is 32 times harder than that; it’d take those same 300,000 computers roughly 150 years."

But faster home computers, and the power of distributed computing (which shares portions of a monumental task among many thousands of users), seems to have shortened the time scale. "Cryptographic attacks always get better, sometimes by a factor of two or four, but they never get worse," Schneier says.

In an essay he wrote for last August’s Computerworld magazine, Schneier hinted that researchers at the time were perhaps close to breaking SHA-1. The essay urged cryptographers to start work on the next generation of one-way hash functions, before the current generation became so broken as to be unusable.

New Mydoom Worm on the Move

Call it the worm that simply will not die. Anti-virus vendors have begun issuing warnings that yet another variant of last year’s notorious Mydoom is spreading fast.

This variant, Mydoom.AO or W32/Mydoom.bb@MM worm, also known as Mydoom.bb, uses Google, Altavista, Yahoo and Lycos to search for e-mail addresses in

order to replicate itself; thus a single infected computer can distribute thousands of copies of the worm in just a few minutes, according to Panda Software CTO Patrick Hinojosa.

Like the other variants, this Mydoom installs a back door onto the infected computer, which makes it highly likely it is being spread by hackers who work for spammers and other Internet miscreants. "They are probably laying the groundwork for a spam attack or to look for credit card strings," he tells NewsFactor.

That is probably the disconcerting reason for Mydoom's persistence: It has been proven effective. "The Mydoom family was one of the most successful viruses ever," Sophos security consultant Graham Cluley tells NewsFactor. That is why it keeps getting repackaged and released.

Compared to the earlier variants, he says, Mydoom.AO is spreading at a relatively slow pace. "It is spreading faster than anything we have seen in recent weeks, but nothing compared to the significant numbers of earlier attacks," he says.

According to Panda Sofware, after Mydoom AO finds a likely e-mail address, it attempts to trick users by pretending to be a mail delivery error message.

The name of the attached file that actually contains the worm is chosen at random and has one of the following extensions: ZIP, COM, SCR, EXE, PIF, BAT or CMD.

This is not the first time a virus has made use of a search engine in order to spread. According to Luis Corrons, director of PandaLabs, Mydoom.N was the first virus to use this strategy. "This new worm is following in its footsteps," he says.

Virus creators are finding Internet search engines a powerful tool for rapidly spreading malicious code. This tactic effectively multiplies the propagation capacity of a virus, and it is therefore likely that we will see more of the same.

Microsoft Plans Free Anti-Spyware Program

Stepping up its fight against computer threats at the risk of alienating security businesses, Microsoft Corp. announced Tuesday it will give away a program to combat privacy-stealing and PC-clogging spyware and other virtual pests.

Microsoft co-founder Bill Gates also unveiled plans to release antivirus tools for consumers and make a major security upgrade to its Internet Explorer Web browser. At the same time, he showed off new software for businesses to combat security threats.

The moves are part of a wide-ranging effort by the world's largest software maker to improve the security and reliability of its Windows operating system and other programs, which have become favorite targets of hackers, virus writers and other malware creators.

Speaking at the annual RSA Conference, a major gathering of computer security experts, Gates outlined successes over the past year but did not

suggest total victory was imminent or even possible. Microsoft has distributed more than 170 million copies of a major security enhancement to Windows XP since its release last year, but Gates said more work is needed.

"It’s a challenging area and new threats seem to be emerging all the time," Gates said. "But I’m optimistic ... we’ll be able to mitigate the security problems and therefore let the advances of this digital infrastructure allow for fantastic things to happen."

Gates said spyware and adware threats are growing more quickly than worms and viruses. The programs that track Web surfing, generate pop-up ads and slow systems are often installed when users try to run free software without reading the license agreement. Later versions also have taken advantage of known Windows flaws to sneak onto machines.

"Spyware ... is something we need to nip now," Gates said.

In December, Microsoft purchased Giant Software Co. and turned its offering into Microsoft AntiSpyware. Gates said more than 6 million copies of a free "beta," or test, version have been downloaded.

Besides the consumer software, Microsoft will sell tools that are better suited for businesses where administrators need more control over their computers.

But numerous companies are already selling or giving away programs for cleaning machines of the unwanted programs. Microsoft’s decision to give its software away is reminiscent of its decision to bundle an Internet browser and media player with Windows - something that landed the company in legal hot water both in the United States and Europe.

Microsoft’s plan to give away its software didn’t surprise or scare Richard Stiennon, vice president of threats research at Boulder, Colo.-based Webroot Software Inc., maker of the popular Spy Sweeper program. Webroot charges $29.95 a year for updates and support.

"All I can say is, you get what you pay for," Stiennon said. "Security is a huge learning curve to climb, and Microsoft is just stepping into these waters."

Microsoft’s free product also is likely to be targeted by hackers and other malware developers. Just last week, a "Trojan horse" program was detected that attempts to shut down its antispyware program as well as steal online banking passwords.

"It may be the first of many such future attacks," said Gregg Mastoras, senior security analyst at Sophos PLC, a security firm.

Microsoft’s broader consumer antivirus tools, which Gates said would be made available by the end of the year, will face similar challenges. He did not elaborate on what will be offered or how much it might cost.

The tools for consumers and businesses will compete directly with existing products from the likes of Symantec Corp., McAfee Inc. and others, all of which have been profiting for years from Microsoft vulnerabilities and the hackers who target them.

"It will be a battle, but (security companies) have been expecting this to come for a while and they’re prepared for it," said Bruce Schneier, founder

and chief technology officer of Counterpane Internet Security Inc.

Vincent Gulloto, vice president of McAfee's Antivirus and Vulnerability Emergency Response Team, said his company currently has a partnership with Microsoft and "we have all intentions to maintain it."

Symantec also plans to continue partnering with Microsoft, but noted the software giant hasn't released details on how it's going to jump into the market, Symantec said in a statement.

"As long as there is (a) level playing field, we welcome that competition," the statement read.

Gates also said Microsoft would begin testing this summer an update to its Internet Explorer browser, version 7. The update, mainly security-related improvements, would be available only to users of the latest version of Windows - XP with last summer's Service Pack 2 upgrade, which also came with security improvements to IE 6.

It also will be bundled with the next version of Windows, code-named Longhorn.

The company did not mention any non-security improvements such as features found in rival browsers like Mozilla Firefox and Opera.

Yahoo Sees Small Victory in Nazi Dispute

Free speech activists and Yahoo Inc. declared a small victory Thursday in a dispute over whether the e-commerce giant can host auctions for Nazi memorabilia on its U.S. sites.

The 9th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals said it would rehear some arguments in a 5-year-old lawsuit against Yahoo by two French human rights groups, which are trying to ban the sale of Nazi-related items on any Internet site viewable in France.

France's Union of Jewish Students and the International Anti-Racism and Anti-Semitism League sued Sunnyvale, Calif.-based Yahoo in 2000 and won a French court order requiring the company to block Internet surfers in France from auctions selling Nazi memorabilia. French law bars the display or sale of racist material.

Yahoo stripped Nazi memorabilia - including flags emblazoned with swastikas and excerpts from Adolf Hitler's "Mein Kampf" - from its French subsidiary, yahoo.fr. But to the anger of French Jews, Holocaust survivors, their descendants and other activists, Yahoo kept such items on its vastly more popular site, yahoo.com.

Although that site is run on computer servers in California, it's accessible to Web surfers anywhere in the world.

For failing to take down the offensive items, French courts began levying fines on Yahoo of more than $13,000 per day starting in February 2001. Yahoo theoretically owes more than $5 million today.

In 2002, Yahoo asked the U.S. District Court to rule that the French order violated the U.S. Constitution's First Amendment, arguing that the fines

created a "chilling effect" for all Internet service providers.

District Court Judge Jeremy Fogel of San Jose ruled that if Yahoo wanted to continue selling items on a site that could be accessed around the world, the company had to assume the risk that it could violate laws of other countries and was subject to more lawsuits. But in August, the Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals reversed Fogel's decision, saying he had no authority to hear the case.

The two-sentence ruling Thursday does not explain how the judges came to their decision but forces both sides to argue their cases again in front of an 11-judge panel, likely this spring.

The new opportunity for a courtroom victory, Yahoo executives said, could benefit all Internet service providers and anyone who publishes content online.

"If American companies have to worry that foreign judgments entered against them might be enforceable, it could end up with companies censoring their Web sites," said Mary Catherine Wirth, senior corporate council at Yahoo and a professor at University of California Hastings College of The Law.

Attorney Richard Jones, who represented the French organizations, called the decision "meaningless" and said there's no reason to believe the new panel would vindicate Yahoo.

Jeffrey Pryce, a lawyer specializing in Internet and international suits in the Washington office of Steptoe & Johnson LLP, emphasized that decisions to revisit cases are rare, suggesting that the new panel of judges may be inclined to rule that Yahoo needn't comply with French laws on its U.S. sites.

Sun to Show Off Enhanced StarOffice, JDS

Sun Microsystems Inc. plans to preview the beta of its upcoming StarOffice 8 desktop productivity suite, currently slated for release by midyear, as well as Release 3 of its Java Desktop System, due next quarter, at the LinuxWorld Conference in Boston this week.

Herb Hinstorff, a director at Sun, told eWEEK that the Santa Clara, Calif., company, will be highlighting the expanded device support in the third release of JDS, which is based on the Linux 2.6 kernel.

"We will be reminding people that the JDS provides a true alternative desktop with some security and affordability advantages over the legacy alternatives and how Release 3 advances that," Hinstorff said.

Also at LinuxWorld, HP and Novell are opening up more code.

On the interoperability front, a big focus will be on improvements, including better interoperability with Microsoft Exchange and Microsoft file formats (Samba 3.0 is included to provide better file format interoperability) as well as improved Internet Explorer compatibility in Mozilla.

"Linux and other alternatives have to fit really well into legacy environments; they have to be able to coexist easily in these environments,

and we have concentrated on providing that," he said.

Among the key enhancements to StarOffice 8, which moves to a public beta this week and will stay open for the next six weeks, is better interoperability with Microsoft Office. "We have made significant usability enhancements so that when users download and use it they will see the changes we have made to the look and feel of the product," Manish Punjabi, Sun's group manager for StarOffice/OpenOffice.org, told eWEEK.

StarOffice 8 will also have better import/export filters. Sun is also trying to reduce the migration cost from an enterprise standpoint as well as lower the risk of migration through better migration support. "We will now support the conversion of Visual Basic-based macros to StarOffice-based macros," Punjabi said. "We also made significant enhancements to the database functionality, which is now more like Microsoft Access."

In addition, StarOffice 8 will provide, for the first time, an automated way for users to migrate their macros. The StarOffice spreadsheet application will now support 65,536 rows, the same as number supported by Microsoft Excel. "This is a document format compatibility kind of attribute," he said.

With regard to presentations, StarOffice 8 enables users to import and export their animations developed in PowerPoint, which will convert over to StarOffice, Punjabi said.

On the thorny issue of compatibility with Microsoft Office and the products in that suite, Hinstorff said StarOffice 8 took "another big step forward." The product development team spent a lot of time addressing more basic user issues, like providing the ability to take a document, read it, write it and have everything preserved.

"Across the board our message is going to be interoperability, a compatible, easy-to-use user experience and a bigger set of devices supported. We will also focus our discussions at LinuxWorld on our contributions to open source. All of this is based on open source and things that we have contributed in addition to community products," he said.

Sun will also be focusing on the positioning of the products in the market. "For those mainstream core features used by the majority of users, the interoperability with other legacy software is very strong," Hinstorff said.

"We want the public beta to expose any of the corner cases that we may have missed. The feedback we have got so far shows that compatibility is very good," he said.

Punjabi said Openoffice.org will also benefit from the majority of the changes in StarOffice. "But the commercial quality spell checker and some other features are not included in Openoffice.org," he said.

Bugs Delay AOL Netscape Beta

America Online is delaying the release of the first public test version of a new Netscape Web browser until the end of the month so that it can fix some last-minute bugs, the company said today.

The beta version of the Netscape 8 browser had been scheduled for public release tomorrow, but that date will slip by a week or two, an AOL spokesman said in a statement sent via e-mail. An early version of the browser that the IDG News Service saw late last month crashed many times under normal use.

The new Netscape browser is designed to protect users from scams and malicious code while surfing the Web. One feature, for example, adjusts the browser security settings based on a list of known malicious Web sites to protect users from phishing scams.

With this release, AOL takes aim at Microsoft's dominant Internet Explorer Web browser, which has suffered from many security vulnerabilities. In addition, AOL is looking to piggyback on the popularity of Mozilla's Firefox, an open-source Web browser released in November that has since been downloaded more than 25 million times.

In an about-face, Microsoft on Tuesday said that it would release a test version of a new IE browser by midyear. Previously the company had said that it wouldn't release a new browser until the next version of Windows, code-named Longhorn, ships in 2006. There hasn't been a new version of IE in four years. The new IE 7.0 will address security issues such as phishing schemes, Microsoft said.

Phishing is a prevalent type of online attack that typically combines spam e-mail messages and fraudulent Web pages that look like legitimate e-commerce sites. Such attacks are designed to steal user names, passwords, credit card numbers, and other sensitive information.

Netscape 8 is based on Firefox but also supports the IE browser engine. AOL released a preview version of the browser to a select group of testers in late November. The Netscape browser doesn't include the IE engine but it uses the engine that is incorporated in Windows. As a result, the Netscape 8 browser works only on Windows computers.

Microsoft to Release New Internet Browser

Microsoft Corp. will release a new version of Internet Explorer, the world's most popular Internet browsing software, with new, built-in security features, Chairman Bill Gates said on Tuesday.

In a speech at a major security conference here, Gates said Internet Explorer 7.0, with new anti-spyware features, will be released for preliminary testing this summer.

The move comes three years after Microsoft, the world's biggest software company, launched a major initiative to improve the reliability and security of its software, which runs on about 90 percent of all personal computers.

Students Launch Online Auction for College

At the end of each semester, Bentley College sophomore Shahzad Zia usually

offers his used textbooks to the highest bidder on the most popular Internet auction sites. This spring, he plans to list them for a more exclusive community - and save money in the process.

Zia plans to post his books on College Junktion, an online auction designed by college students, for college students, that opened for business Friday. Registration to the Web site - www.collegejunktion.com - requires a valid ".edu" e-mail address. Such addresses are reserved for people connected with schools.

President, CEO and University of Miami sophomore Jason Baptiste developed College Junktion with two friends living on the same dormitory hall.

The idea grew from a bulletin board Baptiste passed while going for a cup of coffee on campus. "There was this board with hundreds of flyers of stuff for sale - a car here, a textbook there, this TV. The only way to get exposure was this board," he said. "I thought, ’What could I do to make this easier? Why not create a service to buy, sell and trade them on the Internet?’"

It’s no longer a unique idea, with online giants Amazon’s and eBay’s massive auctions and the regional classifieds on craigslist. But Baptiste, 19, from Norwood, N.J., plans to combine auctions with networking features found on Friendster or thefacebook, which link users by common interests or acquaintances.

Within the next few months, Baptiste said, photo sharing, calendars, blogs and user groups will be added to the site. Eventually, the friends-of-friends listed in a seller’s network could become a potential pool of buyers he can contact directly.

On College Junktion Friday morning, Joel Glynn, Miami junior and company vice president, listed a textbook from one of his prelaw classes, Thomas L. Tedford’s "Freedom of Speech in the United States."

If a potential buyer wants to know whether Glynn actually found the book useful before placing a bid, a link under Glynn’s profile sends a message directly to his e-mail, allowing him to respond without being logged onto the auction.

The key to this transaction is dot-edu; it only works for students, faculty and university staff.

Coupled with an e-mail verification for registration, it’s meant to work as an automatic security check. "If somebody signs up with a fake e-mail address, it bounces back to us, so we can see who that is" and keep them off the site, Baptiste said.

That restriction defines College Junktion in a crowded Internet marketplace, said Ina Steiner, editor of the online trade magazine AuctionBytes.com.

"In the time since eBay started - that’s been 10 years - scammers have really figured out how to play the system, how to commit fraud," she said. Steiner said that online buyers are now asking, how safe is their personal information?

College Junktion testers at schools around the country praised the limited access, saying they’re more comfortable trading with fellow students with similar needs.

"The fact that it’s being run by college students is reassuring," said Lisa DePascale, a freshman at Quinnipiac University in Hamden, Conn. "You know you can relate to the person that started it, and that they’re looking out for the best interests of someone my age."

College Junktion initially included auction categories for class notes and term papers. Baptiste said he decided to withhold these features Friday over questions of security and plagiarism.

Steiner cautions that a ".edu" e-mail address alone won’t ensure safer online auctions.

"Users still shouldn’t be lulled into a false sense of security. Whether a college student is more responsible than anyone else is up for grabs."

Compared with eBay, which according to a spokesman had 1.4 billion listings in 2004, College Junktion is starting small. About a thousand listings, mostly for textbooks and electronics, and a few hundred users were registered for Friday’s launch, Baptiste said.

Investments from family and friends got College Junktion off the ground. Advertising, premium listing charges, and entry fees for promotions such as +video+ game tournaments will sustain it, said Ben Horwitz, a Miami freshman and the site’s chief financial officer. Revenue from the students’ other e-commerce company, Miami Merchants Inc., will supplement the auction site.

College Junktion won’t charge for basic listings, or take commissions from sales. Baptiste hopes to attract eBay sellers such as Boston-area student Zia, who said he’s switching to the new auction to avoid eBay’s increased fees on some listing options.

"It costs me an extra three to five bucks (in eBay fees), and I think that’s going to double, so that’s just money wasted," Zia said.

Online auction watchdog Rosalinda Baldwin, editor of The Auction Guild newsletter, doubts that the free listing options will entice many eBay sellers to defect.

"In general, the people who are selling online, most of us are in our 40s, 50s, 60s and 70s. People think, ’Online - oh, cool, young.’ No, it’s the baby boom generation online," she said.

Company Pulls Out of Deal to Track Students

The grade school that required students to wear radio frequency identification badges that can track their every move has ended the program because the company that developed the technology pulled out.

"I’m disappointed; that’s about all I can say at this point," Earnie Graham, the superintendent and principal of Brittan Elementary School in Sutter, said Tuesday night. "I think I let my staff down. Nobody on this campus knows every student."

The badges, developed by Sutter-based technology company InCom Corp., were introduced on Jan. 18. The school board was set to talk about the

controversial policy Tuesday night but tabled the discussion after InCom announced it was terminating its agreement.

"I'm not convinced it's over," parent Dawn Cantrall, who filed a complaint with the American Civil Liberties Union, told the (Marysville) Appeal-Democrat. "I'm happy for now that kids are not being tagged, but I'm still fighting to keep it out of our school system. It has to stop here."

The system was imposed, without parental input, by the school as a way to simplify attendance-taking and potentially reduce vandalism and improve student safety.

While many parents criticized the badges for violating privacy and possibly endangering children's health, some parents supported the plan.

"Technology scares some people it's a fear of the unknown," parent Mary Brower told the newspaper before the meeting. "Any kind of new technology has the potential for misuse, but I feel confident the school is not going to misuse it."

Each student was required to wear identification cards around their necks with their picture, name and grade and a wireless transmitter that beamed their ID number to a teacher's handheld computer when the child passed under an antenna posted above a classroom door.

The school had already disabled the scanners above classroom doors and was not disciplining students who didn't wear the badges.

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